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What is a prayer circle?

Question: "What is a prayer circle?"

Answer: The term *prayer circle* has changed in meaning through the years. In days gone by, when believers would gather in a circle to pray, they would call that a prayer circle. Today, a prayer circle can also refer to a method of “claiming” certain things in prayer: a circle literally drawn around things a person wants or the circuit taken by people who walk in circles around areas as way of “claiming” them in Jesus’ name.

The concept of prayer circles has become popular, in part, from the bestselling book *The Circle Maker* by Mark Batterson. The author says, “Drawing prayer circles around our dreams isn’t just a mechanism whereby we accomplish great things for God. It’s a mechanism whereby God accomplishes great things in us.” Batterson uses the legend of Honi the Circle Maker as the basis of his prayer method.

Honi Ha-Ma’agel was a Jewish scholar from the first century BC. According to the story, Honi drew a circle in the dust, stood inside it, and told God he would not move until it rained. When it started to sprinkle, Honi informed God that he wanted more rain. It then began to pour. Then he wanted a calm rain, so he told God, and the rain calmed. In the book, Batterson

uses Honi's example to encourage his readers to draw prayer circles around their dreams, family, job, problems, goals, and so on. This article is not a review of the book. There are plenty of those online. Instead, it is a critique of the concept of prayer circles in general.

Is the concept of prayer circles biblical? Does this "new way to pray" have support in the Bible?

- The prayer circle method of prayer is based on an extra-biblical Jewish story. Honi is not a biblical prophet, and the Bible does not mention him. Many proponents of prayer circles equate (or at the very least, compare) Honi's authority to that of [Elijah](#). There is a stark contrast between Honi and Elijah, though. Biblical prophets were instructed to wait for God's voice and then pass along God's directions to others. Honi did not wait. Instead, he devised a plan of drawing circles and demanded the Lord comply with his wishes.
- Prayer circles are not mentioned in the Bible. If prayer circles were important and provided authority, Jesus would have included the idea in His prayer tutorial to His disciples ([Luke 11:1-4](#)). At the very least, if prayer circles were helpful in our prayers, they would have been mentioned somewhere in Scripture.
- Biblical prayer comes from a humble heart, submitted to God's will and desirous of God's glory. The Bible never mentions marching in circles during prayer, drawing circles around objects, or demanding what we want to receive from God. The prayer circle system has undertones of the "name it, claim it" philosophy that exalts man and his "faith" above God. While many proponents of prayer circles deny an association with "[name it, claim it](#)" ideology, there are connections. God does not need us to release Him or give Him permission before He blesses us.
- The Bible instructs us to pray boldly and to be persistent, but we should never attempt to manipulate God through a specific formula or ritual. We should be wary of any teacher who says that certain physical actions give prayer more power or authority. We are nowhere in Scripture called to "claim" what we deem as rightfully ours.
- The Bible does not attribute power to proximity or visualization. For example, a prayer for a person to find employment is no more or less powerful offered sitting in one's home than offered while walking around the office building. To believe that prayers offered in one setting or position are more effective than those offered at another time or in another manner is more superstitious than scriptural. While we may feel the need to be close to a location or situation to pray more clearly,

we must remember that our heavenly Father is omnipotent and omnipresent. God knows exactly what needs are present and will respond to our prayers in His own perfect will and timing.

Likewise, visualizing one's prayer with a prayer circle does not give it more authority. The human mind has no power to create reality or reshape the world to one's liking, no matter how focused the thoughts or clear the visualization. God alone creates, and every good and perfect gift comes from Him ([James 1:17](#)). Visualizing the answer to prayer will not make it more likely to be answered.

God's Word gives us specific instruction about [prayer](#). We don't need to add to those instructions in an attempt to manipulate God's power or receive answers to our prayers.

Recommended Resource: [The Prayer That Turns the World Upside Down: The Lord's Prayer as a Manifesto for Revolution by R. Albert Mohler Jr.](#)

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